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FONDATA DA GIOVANNI TRECCANI**

The absurd consequence of these severe shortcomings is that *Atomism and Its Critics* falls, from a historiographical point of view, behind Kurd Lasswitz' century-old *Geschichte des Atomismus*. This is all the more tragic as Pyle is the first author since Lasswitz to tackle the history of atomism from antiquity to the early modern period with the necessary combination of philosophical rigour and historical sensibility. A Pyle, capable of integrating into his formidably structured analysis the entire range of primary texts and relevant scholarship, would indeed have been an unmixed blessing for the history of science and philosophy.

CHRISTOPH LÜTHY

## CHIMIE

ALLEN G. DEBUS: *Paracelso e la tradizione paracelsiana*. Napoli: La città del sole, 1996. (Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici: Il pensiero e la storia, 19.) 126 pp.

Il volume propone in traduzione italiana quattro lezioni napoletane del 1990: un'agile panoramica sulla nascita e le evoluzioni della filosofia chimica dalle formulazioni mistiche cinquecentesche di Paracelso (1493-1541) e dei suoi seguaci alla iatrochimica di Van Helmont (1579-1644) e alla discussione intorno ad essa. La riforma pratica della medicina viene tratteggiata come precoce e rilevante componente della storia della rivoluzione scientifica, complementare a quella puramente fisico-meccanicistica. Una riforma fortemente influenzata nei diversi paesi europei dalle diverse condizioni locali – politiche, culturali e religiose – e articolata prevalentemente intorno al problema della farmaceutica chimica, solo a partire dal primo Seicento, riconosciuta nella sua rispettabilità accademica.

ANNA LAURA PULIAFITO

FREDERIC LAWRENCE HOLMES: *Antoine Lavoisier – The Next Crucial Year. Or, The Sources of His Quantitative Method in Chemistry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998. vii, 184 pp.

Although in his book Professor Holmes explores a relatively short period of Lavoisier's scientific activity (from November 1772 to October 1773), his methodological proposals and his reflections on historiography have great value for the reader. His main aim is to provide a historical reconstruction of "the fine structure of private science" and to this end he draws extensively on Lavoisier's laboratory notebooks. Though Holmes already exploited this source in his *Lavoisier and the Chemistry of Life. An Explanation of Scientific Creativity* (1985), his present study is clear proof that the laboratory notebooks deserve further attention from historians. Perhaps a fuller analysis of the documents available will lead to a reappraisal of the figure of Lavoisier, who has been the subject of renewed scrutiny in recent years.

Laboratory notebooks differ from lectures read at scientific institutions (for example, Lavoisier's famous Easter lecture of 21 April 1773 at the Académie des Sciences), and from